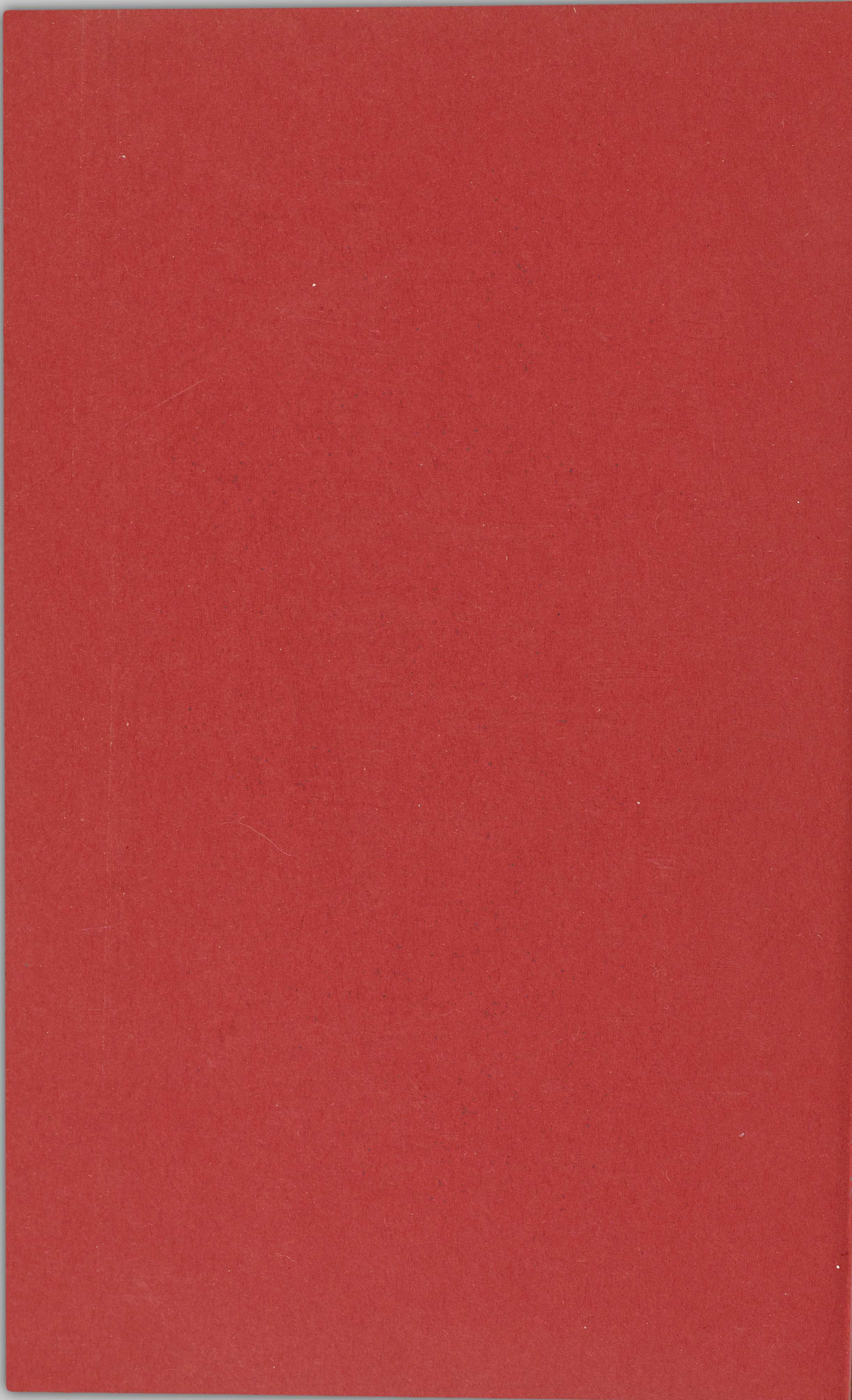


Three Carriers Myths
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TRANSACTIONS
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THREE CARRIER MYTHS.

With Notes and Comments.

BY THE REV. FATHER MORICE, O.M.I.

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INTRODUCTION.

In point of length and general diffusion, the most important of the legends current among the Carrier Indians is that which records the adventures and many deeds of † stas, their national culture hero. But it cannot be described as a Carrier legend: it is merely a Carrier version of a myth which is the original property of the Pacific Coast Indians. Barring some details due mainly to local colouring, its chief incidents are identical, and its hero is but a counterfeit of the Yētl of the Clingit, the Ni-kil-stlas of the Haida and the Kaneakeluh of the Kwakwiutl. Hence, as my studies have so far had for objective the distinctive traits of strictly Déné life and the morphology of the Déné languages, I do not acknowledge myself open to the charge of negligence in not having, to this day, collected more than fragments of that story.

It were tedious, as well as unprofitable, to repeat here what I have said in my former essays of the mixed origin of the Carrier sociology and mythology¹. It must suffice to remark that better opportunities and prolonged investigations have not changed by the length of one iota my convictions in that respect. Even one of the three legends which I now introduce to the lovers of folk-lore, the second, has but a dubiously Déné origin. I find no equivalent of it in the collection of the "*Traditions indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest*" published in 1888 by the Abbé E. Petitot². Yet its details and intrinsic features would seem genuinely Carrier.

With the exception of the third, which is widely diffused among different Déné tribes, none of them has, in the eyes of the natives, any paramount importance. If I single them out among the others which I

¹Are the Carrier Sociology and Mythology indigenous or exotic? Trans. Royal Soc. Canada, Sect. II, 1892.

²Alençon, E. Renaud de Broise, Place d'Armes, 5.

have transcribed, it is because I think that, though each of them is given the outward garb of an apologue, the events they refer to can, without exaggeration, be considered as endowing them with the character more of traditions than of myths properly speaking. My meaning will become more apparent from a perusal of the comments wherewith I have ventured to accompany them.

These, I fully expect, will find many an incredulous reader, when they do not excite the supercilious pity of the modern critic. Speaking of the Vedas and the Rigveda is much more fashionable in certain circles than quoting the Bible and referring to the momentous events mentioned in Moses' Genesis. Another school of folk-lorists would also see in the native American myths nothing but personifications of natural phenomena. But I cannot help thinking that the latter's ingenuity would have to be exercised to a rather remarkable degree if they were looking, as they are wont, to the following detailed legends for a figurative account, say, of the daily conflict between light and darkness or some other physical phenomenon. As to the former, I suppose one may always be permitted to refer to the Biblical narratives, were it only as to historical chronicles, independently of the inspired character of their authors.

Moreover, it is but just to add that most of my commentaries are merely hints thrown out more in the shape of queries than as incontrovertible facts. Attempts at identifications, I know, are generally dangerous, especially when their basis is such vague and disconnected elements as those furnished by the stories upon which the present paper is founded. Yet these stories contain a few points which, to my mind, are not without significance, and these I shall try to bring out in all sincerity. I am wedded to no pet theory as to the origin of our Indians, and this freedom from preconceived ideas leaves me so much the more at liberty to speak out my mind frankly.

To the proper understanding of an aboriginal myth's meaning, one should not forget that the native chronicles have absolutely no regard for chronology and very little, indeed, for consistency. They abound in anachronisms no less than in synchronisms; and no wonder. A people having no written literature cannot be expected to have preserved in narratives handed down by word of mouth only the exact order of events. Furthermore, the real facts thereby related are almost invariably hidden under a thick veil of details more or less puerile, and these details are always coloured after the particular environment of the tribe. The human mind cannot grasp or imagine that a duplicate of which the eyes have never seen in whole or, separately, in its component parts. Therefore one cannot reasonably expect from a native story a correct ac-

count of things the like of which the narrator has not seen. Such long ages have elapsed since the events hinted at have occurred and so many generations of aborigines have been accustomed to the mode of life of their present descendants that it is but in order to be indulgent when it is a matter of detail.

One and the same personage is also often made to play the role of various historical heroes, as we shall see further on.

Another point of mythological exegesis which it is hardly necessary to mention is that when the narrative, turning into an apologue, introduces animal characters, these are not, of course, to be taken literally.

There is also a last point which might be noted here, that relative to the mystic or sacred numbers of some myths. But this will be found explained at length in the course of my remarks on our first legend.

The Carrier stories are generally much more elaborate and longer than those current among the Eastern Dénés. They evidence also a tendency to become apologues or allegories not to be found in their Eastern counterparts. Must this be regarded as a mark of a more cultivated mind and consequently of later origin, or should their very completeness be looked at rather as indicative of greater purity? This I leave to the reader to decide.

A word now as to the way the texts have been collected. Most published accounts of native legends purport to be the English version of the words of some old Indian written on dictation by the transcriber. I tried this system when I resided among the Tsip̄oh'tin some twelve years ago, but the results were most unsatisfactory. I could find no Indian clever enough to dictate to me without interruptions, repetitions or omissions, any single legend. Therefore it is but fair that I should give an idea of my present mode of transcribing aboriginal myths, so that the reader may be in a position to gauge the degree of accuracy of the following texts.

I have a reliable Indian narrate me as clearly as possible the whole of one myth (when this is not too long) in his native language. I then repeat as verbatim as I can what I have heard, subject to corrections when such may be necessary, and then I write down the whole in Indian. My last step is generally to read out my version in the hope of provoking further notices of inaccuracies.

This mode of gathering native legends may appear rather loose and fanciful. Yet it is but justice to myself, no less than to the present versions, to remark that, as I speak Carrier more fluently than English or even than my native French, my thoughts are generally through the channel of the aboriginal idiom, so that I find no great difficulty in

repeating, and afterwards in writing down in almost the same terms what has been told me. This method has also the advantage of preventing the narrative from being cut up in those short, half-line sentences common to the stories transcribed on dictation, and which some may wrongly believe to be the normal condition of Indian phraseology.

The English translations of the following legends have been made in as simple a style and as literal as was possible consistently with intelligibility and clearness of expression. Hence the quaintness of some passages.

I.—PURSUED BY THEIR MOTHER'S HEAD.

Told by Lizette Elmok, of Stella (West End of Lake Fraser).

A man was living with¹ a woman. He always slept away from her whenever he was preparing his traps², and he observed faithfully all the ancient prescriptions. Yet he could catch no game. Animals wanted him not³; they all avoided his traps. Each time that he returned home from a visit to his traps he found his wife with her face painted and her hair carefully combed.

One day that he had left as usual, he spied her from afar, and noticed her painting her face and carefully combing her hair. Then she set out for a tree, dried up yet standing⁴. Once she had reached its base, she seized a stick and therewith struck the tree several blows. Presently two big serpents crept down from the top of the tree and knew her⁵.

Now that he knew why game avoided his traps, her husband returned home unseen by her, and there arrived, he spoke not a word. But shortly after, he took a big knife, concealed it in his bosom⁶ and made for the dried-up tree. Then he did as he had seen his wife do, struck the tree with a stick and when the two big serpents had come down creeping on him, he cut their heads off with his dagger. He next set their mouths and eyes a-yawning by means of splinters and carried them home.

¹ *Ya-rə-sta*, lit. "was sitting near". Is used to designate the matrimonial union.

² See "Notes on the Western Dénés," Trans. Can. Inst., Vol. IV., p. 108.

³ Carrier idiom. The natives always speak of caught game as if a sort of sympathy existed between it and themselves.

⁴ The Carrier word *tən-qaih* means all that.

⁵ In the biblical sense of the word.

⁶ The dress of the primitive Carriers being devoid of pockets, any object carried about the person was either suspended from the neck or from the belt, or, if concealment was desired, stored in the folds of the tunic.

As soon as he got home, he ordered his two little children off, and before they went, he gave to the eldest one, a child of five or six snows, a stone arrow-head, a *ivastco*¹ thorn, a red woodpecker's² tail and a stone dagger. At the same time, he loaded the eldest child with his little brother who was still in the moss³. He finally passed his hand over the little one's mouth, and thenceforth the babe could talk as a grown up child.

The two children, the elder packing the younger, had no sooner departed than their father killed his wife by hurling at her the two big serpents' heads. But as often as a well-directed blow had cut her body asunder, the disjointed parts immediately reunited themselves, so that he could not tear her up to pieces as he wished. Therefore he had to give it up. He simply cut her head off and threw it out of the lodge. Her body he dropped in a rapid near by.

While the two brothers were going on at random, the younger, who was packed by the other⁴, saw of a sudden their mother's head coming out after them. Then he said: "Elder brother, mother's head is pursuing us". Whereupon his elder brother threw out behind himself, without turning back, the stone arrow-head which his father had given him. The arrow-head became at once a mountain which, for the while, cut them off from their mother's pursuit.

But their mother's head was changed into wind and continued to pursue them. "Elder brother, mother's head is still after us," said the little one in the swaddling clothes. Thereupon his brother threw behind him, without looking back, the *ivastco* thorn handed him by his father. The thorn transpierced the head and set it bleeding, after which it was transformed into a thorny bush. The bush grew to a prodigious height, and for a moment it barred the passage to their mother's head. But the head finally jumped over it and continued to pursue them.

Therefore, the child in the moss said again: "Elder brother, mother's head is still coming after us." Then the eldest child threw behind him

¹ *Crategus tomentosa*.

² *Sphyrapicus varius*.

³ The Carriers use moss as swaddling clothes. See "Notes on the Western Dénés," Trans. Can. Inst., Vol. IV.

⁴ The reader should also remember that our aborigines always carry their babes on the back with their face turned in an opposite direction from that of the packer, and that the child is carried in an upright position.

the woodpecker's tail, which was instantaneously changed into fire¹. Yet the head passed through the flames and was still after them.

They then reached a very large lake, a lake so large that the opposite shore was invisible. A narrow dam was formed across the lake, on top of which they passed as on a trail. The dam was disappearing immediately behind them, so that no roadway was left. Yet their mother's head was following them in the air. The eldest child sent it a blow² with his dagger, whereupon two whales³ jumped out of the water and swallowed it.

When they had landed on the other side of the lake, the elder child deposited his little brother down against a stump and made him a ball⁴ to play with.

While the little one was amusing himself therewith, an old man was sighted on the lake who manned an iron raft⁵. Soon after, the old man landed his craft close by the two brothers. Now it happened that the little child's ball fell by accident on the stranger's raft. As the babe was crying for his toy, the old man bade his brother come and fetch it over to him. But as soon as the child was aboard, the old man drew out and made for the middle of the lake. Which seeing, the babe left on shore leaped out of his swaddling clothes and, transformed into a wolf, set out to follow as well as he could the outgoing raft, even as a dog uses to run for us when we are navigating a piece of water.

Meanwhile his brother was bewailing his fate, and kept constantly weeping after him. Therefore, to console him, the old man said: "Weep not; I have at home two beautiful daughters: I will give them out to you as wives."

When they had reached the opposite side of the lake, the old man left the child on the iron raft, and went out to his lodge which was built close by the shore. His two daughters were there. So he said to them: "Go and bring over him who shall be your husband." They therefore went down to the beach, and as soon as they had seen the child⁶ who had so far remained on the raft, they remarked between themselves that

¹ The tail of that bird is red. Hence the passage is allegorical.

² *Yəl'si al'to*, "struck at it," but without releasing his weapon, as Moses did at the crossing of the Red Sea.

³ *To-tco*, "fish-big." No land-locked fish is called by that name.

⁴ *Nəyək*. Known to the prehistoric Carriers.

⁵ Others say a copper canoe. Iron or copper, however, have here the same signification, which is that the craft was of a magic or wonderful description.

⁶ Since he was of marriageable age, he must have been more than a child. Yet the legend calls him a child down to the end. Consistency must not be sought out in aboriginal tales.

he was not the first beautiful child whom their father would destroy. Wherefrom he concluded that the old man was wont to kill children. Yet he followed them into their lodge, and was at once placed between them¹.

After a little while, the old man said to the child: "Let us go by water and bring over some wood to make arrows with." They went out therefore and, crossing the lake, arrived at a place where *amelanchier* was plentiful². This was the slope of a mountain. So the old man, staying on his raft, sent the child ashore to collect the wood. But while the child was climbing up the mountain, the old man pushed his raft off and left for home.

When he was as yet a short distance from the shore, he called out after the big serpents, whereupon two gigantic snakes darted out of the mountain to devour the child. But the child cut their heads off with the dagger which their father had bequeathed him. He then took one of them, set its mouth and eyes ajar by means of splinters, and, making the circuit of the lake by land, got back to the lodge before the old man had arrived by water. Then he hung the snake's head immediately above his father-in-law's sleeping place.

The old man finally came home suspecting nothing. But having accidentally remarked on his own moccasin a spot as of blood just dropped from above, he looked up and saw the snake's head hanging. This so much frightened him that he ran out for fear and commenced crying after his big serpents; for his he called them.

Some time thereafter he said to the child: "Now that we have the wood for the arrows, let us go for the feathers to fletch them." Therefore they went out again by water and crossed the great lake. As soon as they had reached the shore, the old man told the child that the top of the mountain was covered with the feathers of the thunder-bird³ and sent him up to fetch some for him. But the child was no sooner out of sight ascending the mountain than his father-in-law drew out again with his iron raft and set out to return home.

While the child was searching for feathers amidst the rocks of the summit, he suddenly came upon a house and he also met two winged

¹ *I.e.*, was married to them, subject to the trials which he was to undergo at the hands of his prospective father-in-law.

² The shaft of the Carrier arrows was invariably of *A. alnifolia* or service-tree wood.

³ It is a well known fact that most American aborigines believe the effects of thunder to be due to a gigantic bird of the eagle family. The winkings of its eyes produce lightning, while the peals are caused by the flapping of its wings.

maidens¹. One of them coming up to him said: "Our father is terrible and our mother, too, is terrible; they will kill you." Then the youngest said to him: "It is I whom people call *Su-ne-nəp'i*, the skillful concealer." Therefore she took the child up and hid him under one of her wings' feathers.

When her father came home, he remarked: "How is that? It smells of *ḡstas*²!" To which she made answer, saying: "We have seen nobody." But the father-thunder set upon inspecting each of her wing feathers successively. As soon as he got to the one concealing the child, who was no other than *ḡstas*³, the young girl slipped him off so dexterously under the feather just examined that her father did not see him.

Then the thunder-bird began to send forth his bolts. The whole mountain was soon trembling under his peals and his bolts were for a while falling right and left on the rocks of the mountain. It was very terrible. Little by little, however, the father-thunder calmed himself, and the child, whose presence was no more suspected, was at liberty to come out of his place of concealment.

In his agitation the thunder-bird had strewn the top of the mountain with a large number of his feathers. These the child picked up, made a bundle of them and set out to return to the house of his father-in-law, who by that time had got home.

The child therefore descended to the base of the mountain and followed the shore of the lake until he got back to the lodge of the old man. His father-in-law was immensely surprised to see him arrive, inasmuch as he had for a time thought him dead. "Thus it is that this one⁴ torments people!" said the child entering the lodge, and then he cast the bundle of feathers down in the fire-place, the ashes of which, floating up in clouds, fell back on the old man. For the child was angry indeed.

Some time afterwards the old man said to his son-in-law: "Let us fly one against the other⁵." To which the child made answer, saying: "It is you who make the proposition, therefore commence yourself." The old man transformed himself into a grey jay⁶, and set out to fly

¹ This whole episode is substantially found in a separate legend of an Eastern Déné tribe.

² The introduction of *ḡstas* here is evidently an interpolation.

³ So said my narratrix.

⁴ That is the old man; expressive of spite.

⁵ *Nə'to pe ḡgał sūptéh*, that is "let us see which one of us can fly the best."

⁶ *Perisoreus Canadensis*, a bird constantly laughed at by the natives, and synonymous among them with stupidity and vain talk.

across the lake. He had proceeded but a short distance when the child clapped his hands together, which caused the jay to fall in the water. He was so helpless that he got drowned, whereupon a great darkness ensued.

Then the old man's daughters commenced lamenting the loss of their father. "He is terrible¹; he will cause the death of all of us," they said between their sobs. "Do revive him." Their husband went out, therefore, in the old man's raft to where the bird was floating, dead, on the surface of the water. He took it aboard and jumped across it, thereby restoring life to it².

Afterwards the child changed himself into a water-ousel³, and flew across the lake and back without mishap. Consequently, the old man avowed himself beaten. He gave him his own iron raft, together with his two daughters, and let him go and search for his younger brother, who was now a wolf.

So the child went out with his two wives. They alone were doing all the paddling. They landed their husband at every promontory that projected into the lake, and let him follow on foot all the sinuosities of the bays, looking out for his brother-wolf.

After a long journey they reached a place full of footprints. These were caused by dwarfs⁴ who were playing on the shore with his brother's skin. Now the child transformed himself into a stump and planted himself near by. When the dwarfs saw it, some said: "It looks like him."⁵ Others differed, saying: "No, it is not like him." Therefore, to identify the stump, they brought out a big snake which coiled itself round it, and which, after uncoiling, declared: "It is a real stump."

Then, during their sleep, the child cut their throats with his stone dagger, and gathering up his brother's bones, he put them back within their skin. After he had jumped across the whole, it began to crawl as does a worm. Some little bones which he had overlooked he added to the others, and again jumped across the whole, when his brother-wolf commenced to walk naturally.

Pehwənətət. I translate literally, but the hidden meaning is no doubt that their father is endowed with magic powers.

² As well as giving him back his former human condition.

³ *Cinclus aquaticus.*

⁴ *ġtnane*, which means also foreigners, and is at the present day applied by the Carriers to Indians of all but Déné parentage. Dwarfs, in their mythology, generally play a malefic, noxious role.

⁵ That is, like his elder brother.

He then put him on his raft and set out in company with a muskrat and a young beaver. The water was soon noticed to rise up at a prodigious rate. It rose and rose until it covered the highest mountains. Rising still higher, it almost touched the sky, when the child, striking at it with his dagger, the flood began gradually to subside.

He waited a long time, and then sent down in search of land both the muskrat and the young beaver. Very long after, they both came up to the surface, dead. The young beaver had his paw clutched, but empty, while the muskrat's contained a little mud¹. This the child took out and kneaded with his hands so as to extend it into an island. After additional handling, it became a large island on which he and his brother-wolf landed.

He then sent his brother-wolf to see how the land was. On taking leave of his brother, the wolf said: "If I come back silent, you shall know thereby that the land is not yet inhabitable. If I howl from a very long distance, it shall be a sign that the land is well." Then he added: "Know you also that you shall die before me."

So he said, and went. Long thereafter he came back in silence, as the land was not yet inhabitable. But the second time that he had set out to explore the island, he was heard howling from a very great distance. Therefore, *ḡstas*² settled definitely. As for the wolf, he is still in existence, while *ḡstas* is no more.

COMMENTS.

The above is the exact reproduction of what the Carriers give as one continuous legend; but its equivalent among their congeners east of the Rocky Mountains is contained in two or more separate stories. Our narrative is, as to form, of a genuinely Déné character; yet as the historical facts of which I believe it to be but a disfigurement belong to the whole human race, that myth is far from local in origin or diffusion. To the unprejudiced reader, at least two most important events of the remotest antiquity will appear as hinted at by the Carrier tradition: I mean the fall of the first woman and the destruction of mankind by the Noachian deluge. These two points shall be separately treated of.

¹ In the native mythology, while some animals are assigned a ridiculous or hurtful role, others constantly play the part of a benefactor or of a wiseacre. Among the latter is the muskrat, to which is here due the re-creation of the earth, while in another legend (See *Are the Carrier Sociology and Mythology Indigenous or Exotic?* Trans. Roy. Soc. Canada, Sect. II., 1892, p. 125), it is made instrumental in procuring fire for men.

² Another proof of the influence of western on eastern mythology. *ḡstas* should have nothing to do with the present legend.

And first as to the relations of the woman with the serpent. Here is, after the original text of Petitot, the Chippewayan counterpart of the tradition :

"A woman lived with her husband. While her husband was hunting, she said : 'I will go and fetch fire-wood'¹; but she went instead to a big tree full of snakes with which she was living criminally. Then her husband being much displeased and seeing a big tree loaded with fruit and growing among tall grass, he said² : 'Husbands, I have come for you ; come down creeping!' Then the big snakes came down and the husband killed them all instantly. After he had made a soup of their blood for his wife, his wife said when she came back : 'Husband³, wait awhile ; I will go for some wood and then I will eat.' But her husband : 'No, there is plenty of fire,' said he ; 'eat, and then you will chop wood.'

"Finally she went for wood, and, as soon as she got to the big tree, she got very angry and was heard to say : 'I loved dearly my husbands indeed, and behold now they are certainly dead !' Whereupon she returned to her husband ; but as soon as she drew near him, he cut her head off with an axe.

"Then he went to the shore of a river, where he found an old woman called the Locust. 'Help me and ferry me across,' he said to her. Immediately the old woman stretched her legs across and let him pass. Then his wife's head having followed him, said to the Locust : 'Ferry me across the river.' Then the old Locust let the head come rolling on her legs ; but when the head was midstream, the old woman spread her legs apart, causing the head to drop in the river. Ever since people have not seen it."⁴

It will soon be seen that not only is the Carrier myth more detailed and elaborate, but that it affords much better material for identification with history.

With the exception of that relative to the deluge, few myths have been more generally diffused than that of the woman and the serpent. It is well nigh impossible that such a notion be not founded on fact, nay, on a

¹ The text says "fire," but evidently means "fire-wood."

² That is, in imitation of his wife's actions. The eastern narrative could be much clearer, and though the transcriber does not state his method of writing down Indian stories, I suspect that the obscurity of some passages must be due to their having been written on dictation, a disadvantage which would have been avoided by letting the natives narrate uninterrupted the whole legend.

³ Among the Western Dénés, no woman will call her spouse "husband."

⁴ *Traditions indiennes*, etc., p. 389. Another version of the same myth has a somewhat different ending.

fact with momentous consequences, since it has left its impress on peoples so utterly devoid of all kinds of literature as the American aborigines. Woman, serpent and guilt—always of a lascivious character—are three points which seem inseparably connected. In a few cases, it is true, woman and man-serpent may be replaced by man and woman-serpent; but the nature of the relations between the couple remains identical. People will talk of ophiolatry; they will discourse on the Ophites and their unnatural cult of the matter, the serpent, as opposed to the spirit personified by their so-called Demiurgos, the Jehovah of the Bible; they will write learned dissertations on the serpent mounds of the old world and of the new; but if they cared to go to the root of the question, I think they would infallibly find guilty relations, either by word or by deed, between a representative of the human species and a serpent as the ultimate source of such monuments or religious systems.

In the case of the Ophites, it is a matter of notoriety that they worshipped the serpent because, by tempting Eve, he had introduced "knowledge"—*intelligenti pauca*—into the world. That the serpent effigies of America had a cognate origin can be proved by the relics a few of them have been found to contain; but more especially by the prevalence among the aborigines of the tradition of immoral commerce, in times remote, of a woman with a serpent.

Thus in Adams county, Illinois, a serpent effigy has been discovered with fire-beds and evidences of cremation of bodies in the bottom of the mound. Now, the phallic symbol was found there. Nay more, "the skeletons of two snakes were found coiled up between the hands near the secret parts" of some of the bodies¹. The connection between the serpent and the woman, at least by implication, is here evident. In the first case, we have the ophidian mound and the phallic symbol, and in the second, serpent and lasciviousness are associated in a still more suggestive manner.

No less suggestive are the following facts gleaned from the mythologies and the archæological remains of the most important American nations.

As is gathered from the Codex Vaticanus, corporal ills were supposed among the early Mexicans to be produced by as many causes corresponding to the different parts of the body. Their therapeutics must have had something of a homœopathic character, since their doctors cured, for instance, the diseases of the tongue by the earthquake, those of the breath by the air, those of the teeth by a flint, etc. A coloured plate

¹ American Antiquarian, Vol. XVI., p. 17.

reproduced in the Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology¹ explains these mysterious relations. Now the cause assigned to venereal diseases was the serpent, and the serpent was regarded according to the commentary thereon "as that from which their diseases proceeded in their commencement²."

The culture hero of the Aztecs, in whom was also worshipped the human reproductive principle, was Quetzalcoatl. According to Dr. D. G. Brinton³, who speaks after Torquemada⁴, "he was the god on whom depended the fertilization of the womb," and "sterile women made their vows to him, and invoked his aid to be relieved from the shame of barrenness." Now one correct translation of his name is "the beautiful serpent" and one of his surnames is, in the Nahuatl language, synonymous with the virile member. Serpent and phallus—and, by implication, woman—are here again associated.

In the volume emanating from the Bureau of Ethnology quoted above is also reproduced what looks as a pictograph which is stated to have been found in Guatemala. It represents two personages, one, a skeleton, probably symbolical of death, and the other, a person with an emaciated face and in a recumbent position, evidently indicative of a state of sickness. The cause of this is clearly shown in the shape of the serpent, which here again has the same suggestive relation to man, since it is made to encircle the loins of the diseased personage⁵.

But a still stronger argument can be derived from the prevalence of the serpent myth among the American aborigines. We have already noticed it among two different Déné tribes. Among the Abenakies the story is that an oft-married woman was followed by her sixth husband to a wild place among the rocks and finally to a pond. After she had sung a song, a serpent came out of the deep which twined around her and enveloped her limbs and body in its folds⁶. Here we have, therefore, adulterous intercourse with death as its consequence, viz., that of her successive husbands. A variation of the same myth recounts the similarly guilty commerce between a married woman and Atosis, a beautiful serpent.

Among the Zunis, the serpent is said to have gained power over the daughter of a priest-doctor who was wandering near a lake and married her.

¹ Washington, 1893, Plate XLIX.

² Tenth Annual Report, etc., p. 614.

³ American Hero-Myths, p. 128. Philadelphia, 1882.

⁴ *Monarquia Indiana*, Lib. XI, Cap. XXIV.

⁵ *Ubi Suprà*, p. 730, fig. 1235.

⁶ American Antiquarian, Vol. XVI, p. 29.

A story of the Tusayans relates the adventures of a mystic Snake Youth, who brought back and married a strange woman. She gave birth to rattlesnakes which, biting the people, compelled them to migrate¹.

In the Blackfeet mythology the story of the woman and the serpent is so much alike to that of our Carriers that we must trace its main details to a common origin. Briefly told, it is as follows:—The wife of a hunter had a black-snake for a lover, which lived in a cavern or den in a patch of timber. The children set fire to the timber and were chased by the head of their mother, while the body went after the father. The children threw sticks behind them, which became forests; stones, which became mountains; moss, which became a river, into which the head rolled and was drowned².

Now as to the identification of these various traditions with sacred history. According to the Carrier legend, a wife had criminal relations with two big serpents—why *two* will soon be explained. Her husband kills the snakes, cuts off his wife's head and throws it out of the lodge with the result that her children become miserable, wandering over land which is not theirs and incessantly pursued by their mother as if they had to pay for her own guilt. In the same manner, through guilty intercourse with the serpent hailing, as in the American legend, from the tree of "knowledge", Eve deserved death at the hands of her Lord and was punished even in her posterity. She was driven out of the terrestrial paradise, and her children have now to suffer for the sin of their first parent.

The myth as current among the Déné (Carrier and Chippewayan) and the Algonquin (Blackfeet) tribes is rendered even more significant by the fact that even in far-off Ceylon, the natives venerate a statue representing the first woman naked and with a snake coiled round her. Now that woman is represented there *headless* and *at the door* of the temples, while her head is, according to Petitot³, placed on the outside of houses as a talisman against her own malefic powers.

As to the two serpents of the Carrier myth, the duality of the reptile is a matter of mere mysticism of numbers. The sacredness of the number seven among the Semitic nations is well known. Persons ever so little conversant with American mythology are no less aware of the frequent occurrence in native legends of the number four and the mystic virtue

¹ A study of Pueblo Architecture, by Victor Mindeleff. Eighth Annual Report Bur. Ethnol., 1891, p. 17.

² Rev. S. D. Peet in Am. Antiq., Vol. XVI, p. 30.

³ *Traditions indiennes du Nord-Ouest*, p. 393.

supposed to be attached thereto. Thus, to choose an example among hundreds, according to the Navajos, the adopted daughter of the first woman reached maturity in four days; a stranger appeared to her in the woods on four successive days, with whom she thereafter passed four nights. Four days afterwards she gave birth to twins, who in four days grew to manhood, and for four days more remained near the place of their birth. Having gone to the house of their father, who was no other than the sun, the latter's wife was asked four times what had become of them, and, upon their being delivered up to their father, the sun impaled them on spikes of iron set up at each of the four corners of the earth, etc.¹ The same tribe's mythology speaks constantly of four worlds, four winds, four mountains, etc. Folk-lorists are well aware of the fact that the Mayas, the Aztecs, the Sioux, the Algonquins, in fact almost all other American tribes, attach the same importance to the number four².

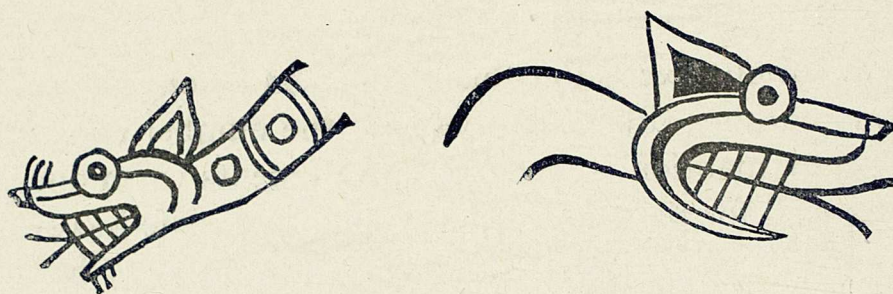
Now, by a curious exception, this is replaced among the Carriers—and possibly among other adjacent tribes—by the number two. Thus in the preceding myth, mention is made of two serpents when one would have done just as well for the purpose; the unfaithful wife has two sons; her head is swallowed by two whales (a circumstance rather hard to account for!); the old man with the precious raft has two daughters, and kills people by means of two serpents. The thunder-bird has likewise two daughters. Finally two animals are taken on the Déné Noah's raft, and the hero does not settle on the new land before the wolf has gone twice to explore it. Another myth recounting the deeds of a sort of Carrier Hercules mentions among the latter's victims two giant snakes, two giant toads, two giant spiders, etc.

¹ A part of the Navajo's mythology, by W. Matthews, *Am. Antiq.*, April 1883.

² Speaking of the symbolism of the number four, I cannot refrain from hazarding a remark which may have its usefulness. There is a very prevalent disposition on the part of such folk-lorists as look to nature and the natural phenomena exclusively for an explanation of native myths, to see in the cardinal points north, south, east and west, the chief reason of the sacredness or of the widespread use of the number four among American aborigines. Their theory is probably grounded on fact as regards certain southern, half-civilized tribes; but I cannot help thinking that, in some cases at least, their explanation is wide of the mark. It should not be forgotten that the points of the compass are but imaginary divisions of space introduced for the sake of convenience by the abstract-grasping mind of the white and other superior races. At all events, some American tribes hardly know any such divisions. This is so true that the Carriers, whose vocabulary possesses some abstract terms, have not even any name for these would-be all important cardinal points. With them the east is *sa pa'a'ah t'séh*, "whence the sun rises up;" the west, *sa na'a'ah t'séh*, "where the sun sets;" the north, *ho'kwaz t'sa*, "the direction of the cold," etc., all explicative phrases, but no real words. Yet their language is rich in locative terms, most of which express some reference to a piece of water, lake or river. Such are, for instance, *mi*, "up" (*i.e.*, up stream or opposite to the outlet of a lake); *nta*, "down" (stream); *no*, "inland" (*i.e.*, away from the water); *ntsən*, "down," towards the shore, etc., etc.

Therefore the two adulterous serpents of our present legend can be considered as one.

A detail which the reader may have noticed in that legend is that the injured husband sets ajar by means of splinters the mouth and eyes of the decapitated snakes. As this circumstance occurs twice in the course of the same story, it is evidently mentioned on purpose. What that purpose may be is more than I can say. Is it revengeful irony at the now helpless condition of the monster, or allegorical of its malice as the source of all evil? An important analogy might be found between this point of the myth and the style of drawing serpent heads common to the semi-civilized nations of Mexico and Peru. On the codices, these heads are generally remarkable for their mouth kept yawning by means of what



Serpent Heads from the Codices.

looks more like extraneous adjuncts than natural teeth. I herewith figure two examples in confirmation of my remark.

Another point of the native theogony perhaps worth noticing is the supposed efficacy of the act of jumping across a subject. Thus the Child of our tradition jumps across the corpse of his metempsychosed father-in-law, who thereby recovers life. So he does later on, and with similar results, with regard to the bones of his brother. This act must have had to the original Indian mind a hidden meaning; for we find that the Kutchin or Loucheux of the Mackenzie River, in common with the Hare Indians, have a periodic festival, not unlike the Phaset of the Hebrews, on the occasion of which the death chant is sung, thus: "O mouse with the pointed nose¹, hasten to jump twice across the face of the earth²!" One feels inclined to hazard as a possible explanation the Egyptian cross, the key of life and health and its probable equivalent on the ancient tau-shaped coppers of the North Pacific tribes, both of which were perhaps nothing else than the symbol of the daily course of the life-giving sun across the heavens. If this be the case, our Indians have long lost all idea of the true signification of this mysterious act.

Might not the flight and vicissitudes of the two Carrier heroes pursued

¹The French *musaraigne*. ²*Traditions indiennes*, etc., pp. 62 et 186.

by their mother's head be considered as a vague reminiscence of the continual journeying of the Hebrews led by the two brothers, Moses and Aaron, away from the land of Egypt which had nursed them for four centuries? There would be nothing very extraordinary in one point of a native myth recalling two facts of analogous nature. The issue of the feud between pursuer and pursued, at least, seems in both cases strikingly similar. After having pursued by land the fugitive Israelites, Pharaoh, reaching the shores of the opened Red Sea, makes bold to follow therein the tracks of his former slaves. But Moses stretches forth his hand over the sea and his pursuer comes to grief together with his army, all being drowned by the return of the waters. In like manner, the Déné Moses long followed by the head of his mother, finally comes upon a large lake which he crosses in a miraculous way. As his tormentor is still after him, even in the middle of the lake, he stretches forth his wonder-working dagger, whereupon his enemy is instantly drowned, or devoured by a monster fish, which is practically the same.

The Carrier hero's adventure on top of the mountain and his meeting with the thunder's children, followed by their father's anger, have counterparts in the mythology of no less than three different native tribes east of the Rockies. It would be too long to reproduce each of them. This part of the myth being so widely-spread must have some importance. Might it not be a vague reminiscence of the giving of the tables of the law to Moses amidst the peals of thunder on the Mount of Sinai and of the casting away of the same at the sight of the prevarication of Israel? The anger of the Carrier hero who throws the bundle of feathers in the fires, the ashes of which finally cover up the old man who has treacherously left him for dead on the mountain, might then recall to mind the irritation of Moses caused by the unfaithful Israelites who had abandoned him and were despairing of his ever coming back to them, and who, on his return, were compelled to swallow the very ashes of the golden calf. This, however, might be too far-fetched, and is given simply as a hint to lovers of identifications.

Another part of the myth which I feel much bolder in assimilating to the Biblical narrative, is the end of the Carrier text. This, I think, everybody will agree, unmistakably points to the destruction of mankind by the deluge. In Moses' account of the cataclysm, mankind is punished for its sins by a flood, the waters of which cover the highest mountains and from which only Noah and his family escape, being floated on the waters by the ark. In the Déné narrative, the waters similarly reach above the highest peaks, and the deluge immediately follows the wrongs

inflicted by the dwarfs on the brother of the hero, *Æstas*, who appears here in the combined role of Noah and of Jehovah.

When the waters have subsided somewhat, the Biblical Noah sent out a raven "which went forth and did not return till the waters were dried up upon the earth¹." The Carrier Noah sends down the beaver and the muskrat, which do not return until one of them brings up a little mud.

Moses' Noah then sends forth a dove "to see if the waters had not ceased upon the face of the earth,"² which returns as a sign that the land is not yet fit for man to inhabit. Likewise the hero of the Carrier legend sends out the wolf to see if the island is inhabitable, with the result that it soon returns with the silent message that it is as yet unfit for him to dwell upon. It is not before a second trial, the equivalent of the second sending of the dove, that he is told by the howling of the wolf, as Noah was by the carrying of the bough of the olive tree, that the earth is henceforth fit again for habitation.

Nobody, disbelieving the autochthony of our Indians, will be astonished to find the remembrance of the deluge vivid among them. That tradition is universal throughout the old world. It is to be found, under one form or another, among the principal nations of antiquity no less than among the aborigines of the new world. Noah and his ark have their counterparts in most of the known mythologies. Everybody is acquainted with the Deucalion Sisyphe of the Greeks: now that personage has duplicates in the Xisuthrus of the Chaldeans, the Yima of the Iranians, the Khasisatra of the Babylonian inscriptions, the Manu of the Hindoos and the Fo-hi of the Chinese.

The universality of the tradition baffles all attempts at incredulity on the part of the most hardened sceptic. What is not quite so clear is the question as to the extent the catastrophe really prevailed. Three different views have been advanced on the subject. There is the opinion, now held by few well informed writers, that the deluge was universal both geographically and ethnographically. The second view, which is now very prevalent among competent critics of all creeds and nationalities, estimates that it was indeed universal ethnographically, but not geographically. Lastly a third opinion, which is held by authors of repute and undoubted orthodoxy, would have it that the catastrophe had no really universal effects, either as regards the earth, or relatively to its inhabitants.

These remarks may appear in the light of an unnecessary digression ;

¹ Gen. viii., 7.

² *Ibid.*

but if digression there be, I think it is not without its usefulness in a paper on Indian traditions. This is my point :

If the Noachian deluge was universal neither geographically nor ethnographically speaking, our aborigines must be assigned a probable Asiatic origin, either by descent or by contact, since they have not forgotten that event. Asiatic, have I said : they could not be represented as coming from Africa, for all the black races are remarkable for the absence in their mythology of any allusion to the deluge. Moreover, the physiological differences between the Africans and the Americans are, of course, too pronounced to admit of any serious comparison between the two races. They could not be said to originate from Oceanica, since the inhabitants of that part of the world are no less devoid of any tradition traceable to the deluge. They could hardly be represented as of European origin, as, in the third hypothesis relatively to the extent of the cataclysm, the flood is not supposed to have extended to that continent, and the few versions of the Noachian deluge found among its primitive inhabitants are of too vague a character to have stood the assault of ages among the uncultured savages who would be supposed to have derived their present traditions on the subject from the original European peoples.

But, a student of the Algonquin mythology will object, the story of the floating raft and the muskrat refers, not to the deluge, but to the creation. I have noticed that position taken by a commentator on a Blackfoot equivalent of that portion of the Carrier myth, and even Dr. D. G. Brinton, who sees therein neither creation nor historical deluge, calls it "the national myth of creation of the Algonquin tribes."¹ In answer to that objection, I need only refer the reader to the Carrier version such as presented above, wherein we see the earth peopled before the catastrophe and a gradual submersion of the globe. In confirmation of this might also be adduced the fact that the Indians referring to that event never call it the creation or re-creation of the world, but most pointedly *to ȳ-tha-dethîzpen* which means "the filling up with water."²

To make it doubly sure that the end of the Carrier myth really refers to the deluge, I reproduce here, after Petitot, the corresponding tradition current among the Hare Indians, their congeners in the North-East. It will be seen that the latter can be identified with even less difficulty with the

¹ American Hero-Myths, p. 41.

² The expression is thus analysed : *to*, up, an adverbial form which requires immediate and intimate connection with the verb ; *ȳ*, sign of the past tense proper to the actualitive form of some verbs ; *dethîzpen* means "filled," and implies at the same time the beginning of a past action.

Mosaical account. After several details practically identical with those of the Carrier legend, such as the quest for arrow-shafts and arrow-feathering, with the adventure with the thunder-bird and its children replaced here by the eagle and the eaglets, the Hare story goes on to say :—

“Then the Wise One made a great raft at the horizon¹. ‘What do you mean with this raft?’ they said. Then he said: ‘If² plenty of water comes, I will go aboard.’ ‘Oh! as for us we will climb up the trees,’ they said. ‘Then as for me, if² there is a flood, I will stay on the raft,’ he said.

“It being so, he made big ropes so and so, worked with many things and made a big raft.

“Therefore the water seemed suddenly to thunder forth, all men climbed on the trees, there came plenty of water, all men perished. Therefore the Wise One having tied his raft with ropes, was floating along. He also placed on his raft pairs of animals, of carnivores and of birds.

“‘There will be no more land,’ he said to them. For a long time there was no more land: it was being said that there was no one to go in search of land. The muskrat dived and went in search of land. He came up to the surface almost dead. ‘Nothing at all!’ he said . . . The beaver having dived after him, was not seen any more for a long time; but afterwards he came up swimming, having a little mud in his hand which he gave to the Wise One. The old man put it on the water. As he wanted the earth to exist again, he blew on the mud, making it a little big. He placed on it a beautiful little bird, whereby it became still larger. Then he let out on the land a fox which ran around it and made it grow still more. He slept once, twice, thrice, four, five, six times running around it³; whereby it became whole⁴.

“The Wise One having put back the animals on the earth, he landed himself with his children. ‘What a number of men there shall be again on the earth!’ he said. Then there were again many men⁵.”

As hinted above, the Algonquin tribes have a myth wherein the muskrat plays exactly the same role as in the Carrier legend and the beaver in its counterpart among the Hare Indians. The only difference in the

¹ Literally, at the edge of the sky.

² *If* and *when* are rendered by the same word in Déné.

³ That is, the fox ran around it on six consecutive days.

⁴ *I.e.*, came back to its normal state of existence.

⁵ *Traditions indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest*, p. 129.

narratives is that the *†stas* of the one and the Wise One of the other are replaced in *some* Algonquin versions by Michabo, the "Great Rabbit." It has been fashionable in certain quarters to indulge in covert sneers at the expense of those who see in some native legends an echo of the past rather than mysterious, enigmatic personifications of natural phenomena. Therefore I will now give in a condensed form the explanation of that myth proposed as the only true one by the most prominent among the allegorical school of folk-lorists, Dr. D. G. Brinton, leaving it to the reader to decide whether his subtleties of speech are more convincing than my own interpretation of the same story.

"In the Algonquin tongue the word for Giant Rabbit is *Missabos*, compounded from *Mitchi* or *Missi*, great, large, and *wabos*, a rabbit. But there is a whole class of related words . . . which sound very much like *wabos*. They are from a general root *wab*, which goes to form such words of related signification as *wabi*, he sees, *waban*, the east, the Orient, *wabish*, white, *bidaban* (*bid-waban*), the dawn, *wában*, daylight, *wasseia*, the light, and many others. Here is where we are to look for the real meaning of the name *Missabos*. It originally meant the Great Light. . . . I believe that a similar analysis will explain the part which the muskrat plays in the story. . . . The word for muskrat in Algonquin is *wajashk*, the first letter of which often suffers elision. . . . But this is almost the word for mud, wet earth, soil, *ajiski*. There is no reasonable doubt but that here again otosis and personification came in and gave the form and name of an animal to the original simple statement. *That statement was that from wet mud dried by the sunlight, the solid earth was formed*¹."

The italics are mine.

In rebuttal of the above, I beg to submit that even in some Algonquin versions² Michabo or Missabos is replaced by the Old One, and in that case the ingenious fabric of Dr. Brinton loses its *raison d'être*. Furthermore, even when the Algonquin hero's personality remains of an animal character, his name varies from Michabo to Manibozho, Nanabush, Messou, Mideathon and Hiawatha³, which I suppose could not be diverted into meaning the Great Light, etc. As to the identification of the muskrat with the wet earth, the soil, through the quasi-homonymy

¹ American Hero-Myths, p. 41-42.

² As in that current among the Blackfeet. See "The Owl," University of Ottawa, May 1890, p. 298.

³ Notes on Primitive Man in Ontario, by David Boyle, Toronto, 1895, p. 18. It may be added that some Algonquins credit the osprey with the success generally attributed to the muskrat.

of the name of both in one Algonquin dialect, if Dr. Brinton's interpretation be the correct one, it must be paramount to stating that the myth itself has an Algonquin origin, since the same play with the words is impossible in connection with their Déné names (*yan* and *tsé-'kér*). Is there any real proof of this priority of origin?

II.—THE BURNING DOWN OF A COUNTRY.

Told by Abel Nəthotcas, Chief of Thatce, on Lake Stuart.

A young man was living with a young woman. All the other women were bringing to their husbands basketsful¹ of 'kərmih² or sap; and yet his wife used to come home with a single shaving of it which she brought him in the hand. He wished to ascertain the reason of this; therefore he followed her one day at a distance. As soon as her fellow-women had reached a place in the woods planted with scrub pines, he saw her proceed on her way, while the others were busying themselves with the scraping of the sap.

When she had reached the trunk of a tree, dried up but still standing, she commenced striking it with a stick, repeating each time: *kələ!* *kələ!*³. Soon a beautiful young man, white as daylight, came out of the top of the tree and played with her.

Thus the young man knew why his wife used to bring him so little sap; so he returned home and arrived there before she got back. Then his wife scraped off as usual a single ribbon of 'kərmih, and took it home to her husband, carrying it in the hand.

One day that she was to return with the other women to collect sap the young man said to her: "Really you do bring me too little 'kərmih. See how the other women are always loaded when they come home. Therefore, lend me your blanket⁴ and your scraper: I will go for it myself."

So he said, and then he clothed himself with his wife's garments and went with the other women, packing an empty *tcajyaq*⁵. But he stopped not with them among the scrub pines; he went on as far as the dried up

¹ *Tcajyaq tizpon*. The *tcajyaq* cannot quite properly be called a basket, but it is its equivalent among our Indians. For figure and description of the utensil, see *Notes on the Western Dénés*, Trans. Can. Inst., Vol. IV., p. 120.

² The 'kərmih is the sap or cambium layer of the scrub pine (*P. contorta*), scraped off in thin shavings by means of a bone scraper. *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

³ Words now devoid of meaning, at least among our Indians.

⁴ That is her outer garment.

⁵ See note ¹ above.

tree. Immediately he set upon striking it with a stick, repeating the words he had heard his wife utter.

Soon enough the beautiful young man white as daylight made his appearance, fell down upon the disguised husband and played with him as one would with a woman. He was trying to know him¹, when the husband cut his head and testicles off with a knife he had kept concealed in his bosom². The head was no sooner separated from the trunk than it was changed into a red woodpecker's scalp. Then he scraped off a great quantity of sap. When he had filled up his *tcajya* therewith, he hid among the shavings of the 'kərmih what he had torn from the daylight young man.

Home again, he presented his wife with the whole, saying: "See what a load of sap I have brought you. Eat it." She therefore began to eat of the 'kərmih, suspecting nothing. But as soon as she had seen the red woodpecker's scalp, she hung down her head, refused to eat any more and commenced to weep. "What ails you?³ Why weep you?" asked her husband. But she answered not and continued weeping.

At the same time columns of smoke were seen all around and tongues of fire appeared on all sides. They soon concentrated themselves towards the point where the couple stood. Very many men perished by fire; only a few escaped.

Meanwhile the red-headed woodpecker⁴ was flying to and fro amidst the smoke and flames repeating its usual cry: *tcan! tcan!*⁵ This caused a few drops of rain to fall which, however, had no marked effect on the conflagration. Then he was heard to say: "Let the scalp of my cousin⁶ be given back to me!" For a time people did not know what he meant. At last some one remarked: "Since he wants his cousin's scalp, let it be thrown up⁷ to him!" Therefore, while the little woodpecker was flying amidst the flames, the red woodpecker's head⁸ was thrown up to him.

A shower fell at once, which soon extinguished the fire. But in his

¹ In the Biblical sense of the word.

² In the Carrier mythology, weapons carried in the bosom are always for a nefarious purpose. See first legend, p. 4, also "Notes on the Western Dénés," p. 52.

³ *Tàmqa?* lit., "What are you feeling?"

⁴ *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*; in Carrier, *tsèl'kən*, "red-head."

⁵ *Tcan*, which to the native ear represents that bird's cry, means "rain" in Carrier.

⁶ I.e., the red woodpecker (*Sphyrapicus varius*).

⁷ To throw to and present with are rendered by the same word in Carrier.

⁸ The similarity of names renders this part of the myth rather obscure in English. This is not the case in Carrier, where the smaller woodpecker is called *tsèl'kən*, whilst its "cousin" goes by the name of *intziq*.

efforts to attract attention, the little woodpecker got the end of his tail burnt, and this explains why it is to this day coal-coloured.

COMMENTS.

This is one of the shortest of the Carrier legends. It is either an idle tale, to while away the long night hours of a hyperborean winter; an allegory concealing under a circuitous phraseology a truth of more or less importance or some cosmogonical phenomenon, or again a legend to be considered as a feeble echo of a historical event. The first hypothesis is, to my mind, entirely gratuitous. Aboriginal tales do not, as a rule, web their fallacious thread around a moral thesis of such an extraordinary description as that pointed out in our myth. There is no lack among our Indians of fabulous stories which are real meaningless tales; it would suffice to reproduce one here to make the difference between them and the above plain beyond dispute. If an allegory, I would ask: Where have our people gone for the subject matter, sodomy, to be thereby re-proved? They know the crime neither in name nor in deed. Or, again, what natural phenomenon could be said to be thereby hinted at? There remains the third hypothesis which may be a mere supposition, yet a supposition with something like a basis and not a little probability in its favour.

The very title of the story is, in the native tongue, grammatically mysterious and mythologically suggestive. *Intziŋ'qa hwotatŋ'kan*, the name it receives in the various versions, means literally: "He (or it) burned down (a country or a town or the universe¹) against (*i.e.*, in opposition to, in punishment of) the Red Woodpecker." *Hwotatŋ'kan* is a transitive verb and as such it must have not only a subject but a complement, expressed or implied. What is the subject? Is it *Yuttare*², the impersonal Deity of the ancient Carriers? It would seem that none other could be imagined. As for the implied complement, it must refer to some locality, not the whole universe, since the text affirms positively that some men escaped from the conflagration. We are thus warranted in translating the title: A country was burned down by the Deity in punishment for the Red Woodpecker's misdeeds.

Barring the mention of the bird's name, which is here evidently symbolical, I would ask in all frankness: Does history record the burning of any other inhabited region than that of the famous cities of the plain,

¹ Were not an extent of country, town or district, implied, the verb would be *tatŋ'kan*, not *hwotatŋ'kan*.

² Lit., "that which is on high." See "The Western Dénés," Proceedings Can. Inst., Vol. VII, p. 157.

Sodom and Gomorrha? It may seem strange that a historical event of comparatively so local an importance should be commemorated in the folk-lore of an American people. Yet it might perhaps be explained that the awfulness of its nature compensates for the limitedness of the territory which it affected. I may be mistaken in my interpretation of this, as indeed in that of the preceding myth; but I cannot help seeing therein some resemblance to the story of Sodom's prevarication and chastisement, and a corresponding dissimilitude from any other event recorded either by history or mythology. Let us rather analyse the main points of our present legend and compare them with the Biblical recital.

And here I must premise an important remark. This myth, in common with the preceding, recounts the story of a crime and its consequences; but a very little reflection will make it clear that the guilt pointed out as material for punishment is, in the second legend, of a quite different nature from that of the first. In the first story, we see criminal relations of a woman with a serpent punished by the death of the woman and the wretchedness of her children. In the second, we have also guilty intercourse of a married woman with a person other than her husband; but, let it be carefully noted, this is not put down as the cause of the conflagration that ensues. After her unseemly conduct, the woman suffers no other pain or anguish than regret for the death of her lover, while the whole country, and with it a large portion of the people, are burnt down in expiation of the attempted crime of the beautiful young man with the outraged husband. Can sodomy be more graphically described or its punishment better assimilated to that of the ungodly inhabitants of the plain cities?

The husband here, no less than the God-fearing Lot of the Bible, escapes free; while the cause of the conflagration, the voluptuous young man, in common with the majority of the population, pays with his life his unnatural crime.

The gathering of the sap or cambium layer of the pine with the apologue of the little red-headed woodpecker are naturally nothing else than the pod which contains the fruit, the shell that conceals the pearl, namely, the historical fact. So much so, that these circumstances vary with the locality of the narrator, while the nature of the guilt itself with its consequences remains identical.

The native fondness for the apologue is no doubt responsible for the anecdote at the end, no less than for the transformation of the young man's head into a bird's scalp. Unable to account for the fact related by their ancestors, the aborigines must have thought they had discovered

in nature an adequate explanation of it. The woodpecker (*întziî*) is fire-coloured; therefore to it must be ascribed the cause of the raging flames. Its congener, the *tsèl'kan*, is fond of crying for rain: *tcan ! tcan !* Who else then could have been instrumental in extinguishing the fire? This is what is called fiction; it widely differs from the part of the tradition above commented on.

But, a reader may object, if such a characteristically Jewish tradition has found its way even into far-off America, must not the aborigines who now relate it be assigned a similarly Jewish origin? Now, has not this theory been exploded long ago? To which I beg to answer:—

To conclude from this single fact to a Jewish or simply Semitic origin for our Indians, would be to outreach the premises. On the other hand, to pretend that their ancestors have had no intercourse, direct or indirect, even possibly by intermarriages, with a population of Semitic descent is, I think, more than could consistently be done. I am not here to discuss the origin of the Dénés, a question on which, I repeat, I have no fixed convictions; but I may be permitted to remark that several peculiarities of their mode of life, their customs, their language, and even some of their mythological allusions¹ would assign them a mixed origin. As the question at present stands, they cannot be considered as autochthonous on the American continent; several of the traditions of the Eastern Dénés point to a western region as the place of the tribes' birth. Now, west of their present territory you are confronted by the North Pacific Coast. If the aboriginal hordes crossed from Asia to America, a journey entailing but very little difficulty, what would prevent their having been in contact with populations initiated into the theogony of the Jews and the principal points of their wonderful history? It is well known that the world-wide dispersion of that nation does not date from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Clannish as they are, the Jews have, from time immemorial, been more or less cosmopolitan. Even before the famous Babylonish captivity, they were to be found throughout the larger part of the Asiatic continent. In 719 B.C., Salmanassar, king of the Assyrians, had transported the inhabitants of Samaria into the most remote village of Media. In 676 B.C. Assaharaddon distributed the remnant of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel over Persia, Media and the distant provinces of the East. Dispersed after the captivity of Babylon over the whole of the then known Asia, the Israelites of the ten tribes proceeded in numerous caravans to Persia, India, Thibet and even China. Their first migration into the latter country appears to have taken place over 2000 years ago under the dynasty of the Khars. They numbered

¹ See first part of third legend.

70 families, all of the same name, which were soon dispersed into several cities, even in Peking¹. At length, according to Strabo, who wrote in the days of Pompey and Caesar, "the Jews were scattered into all the cities, and it was not easy to find a spot on earth which had not received them and where they were not settled."

Speaking only of Asia, we find that in 878 of the Christian era, Hoang-Tchas, the founder of a Chinese dynasty, having taken the town of Kahn-Fou, which had shut its gates against him, he put to the sword 120,000 of its inhabitants, among whom Jews and Christians are mentioned.²

Describing his vast dominions, the famous and somewhat enigmatic Prester John said in his letter addressed in 1165 to the emperor of Constantinople, and regarded by some as authentic: "Beyond that river are ten Jewish tribes who, although they choose their own kings, are nevertheless the slaves and tributaries of our Excellency³."

The great Kublai-Khan, though a Buddhist by religion, is reported to have been tolerant towards all creeds, notably that of the Jews. He said that there were four great prophets, Jesus Christ, Mahomet, Moses and Chakia-Mouni. His army, which was composed of troops from all the countries that paid tribute to him, counted Jews and Mohammedans who were numerous enough to be constantly mocking the Christians. Now his empire comprehended the whole of China, Corea, Thibet, Tonquin and Cochin-China, a great part of India beyond the Ganges, many islands of the Indian Ocean, and the whole north of the continent of Asia from the Pacific to the Dnieper.

Lastly, André de Pèrouse wrote in 1326 that in the empire of the great Khan, one of the latter's successors, there were men of all nations under the sun, adding that among the Jews no conversions had been made⁴.

Now, as the Biblical traditions accompanied the Jews in all their migrations, and as the latter were then, as they are now, very tenacious of their faith, if there were anything to be surprised at, it would be that after this, people should manifest surprise at finding among the Asiatic nations, and through them among the American aborigines, Biblical reminiscences either in their customs or in their mythology.

But I am drifting on to slippery ground. This is not the time to seek

¹ M. d'Escayrac de Lanture, quoted by *La France Juive*, by Ed. Drumont, Vol. I., p. 47.

² Christianity in China, etc., by the Abbé Huc, Vol. I., p. 85.

³ *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁴ Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. VI., p. 56.

out the origin of our Indians ; let us return to our legends. I have said that our Dénés seem to be of mixed blood ; the following myth will perhaps strengthen us in that opinion.

III.—MADE CELESTIAL.¹

Told by Zacharie Nusthel (Wolverine), of Stella.

A taneza² had a daughter, and she was a virgin³. He made her pass every night quite close to his pillow, for he was rearing her with the greatest care. Many a young man asked for her⁴, but in vain : her father would not part with her.

Now it happened that on several nights the maiden awoke suddenly and then was aware that somebody was getting away from her. She wanted to know who it was ; she guessed indeed that she was being abused during her sleep. Therefore she filled a little satchel with vermilion and placed it near her pillow. The following night she threw the vermilion at her violator before he had time to get out of the lodge. On the morrow, she inspected all by herself a crowd of young men who were playing at the end of the village⁵, but all to no purpose. As she was returning to her father's habitation, she noticed an old snotty dog spotted on the shoulders with her vermilion. Her heart was exceedingly sorry at seeing this. At the same time she became conscious of having conceived, and after a while people knew that she was pregnant.

Therefore her father, being a nobleman, prepared a lot of tanned skins. Laid one over another, they formed a pile as high as the width of one's hand. These were to serve as a bed for his daughter's delivery⁶ and afterwards to be distributed to his fellow-villagers to celebrate⁷ the birth of his grandchild.

After a short period of pregnancy, as short as that of dogs, the girl was delivered of four little ones, all dogs, three males and one female. Their

¹ This is a rather free translation of its Indian title : *ya-'ké-nĩntil*, "they arrived on the sky."

² Or hereditary nobleman. See "The Western Dénés," Proceedings Can. Inst., Vol. VII.

³ *Sak-əsta*, lit., "she is sitting alone." The virginity of such persons had nothing very meritorious in itself, as it was all but voluntary. It consisted simply in constant seclusion enforced *nolens volens* on the girl by the parents.

⁴ *Tane siya-ətin*, i.e., wanted to marry her.

⁵ Carrier villages consisted very generally of a single row of lodges terminated by the funeral posts, the ground of which served at the same time as campus or play-ground.

⁶ Illegitimate births were not looked upon by Carriers with the same degree of shame as they now inspire.

⁷ Or atone for. See "The Western Dénés," Proc. Can. Inst., Vol. VII., p. 164.

grandfather was so mad at this that he tore the dressed skins off from under them and cast them in the fire. Then he packed all his belongings and, going away together with his wife, he abandoned his daughter. All the inhabitants of the village did likewise, and they migrated to a distant country; for they were too much ashamed. Moreover, to cause the death of the woman and of her little dogs, they carefully extinguished the fire of each lodge¹. But an old woman there was who thought herself unable to undertake a long journey. She succeeded in snatching away by stealth a firebrand, which she concealed until all had left. This fire prevented them from dying of cold and hunger.

Shortly after she had been abandoned, the mother of the little dogs heard a slight noise as of the gnawing of a piece of wood. She soon perceived that a rabbit had made a hole in the board wall of the lodge. A like hole was afterwards made by rabbits at each of the other walls. At each of them the mother set a snare wherewith she soon caught plenty of rabbits. Their flesh she ate herself, and with their skins she made blankets for her little ones. The latter grew up very fast, and they seemed to be very fond of play.

Now it happened that their mother left one day to gather at some short distance bear-berries² for the family. When she got back, she saw on the floor of the lodge many human foot-prints, and perceived that the whole house was full of dust as if a dance had been in progress. She was very much surprised at this. So she set her mind upon discovering who had made the foot-prints. Therefore, she left again as usual to pick up bear-berries. But once arrived at the place where the fruit was abundant, she disposed her blanket as a mannequin, which she laid up against a stump. She wanted thereby to deceive her little dogs and make them believe that she was still at the berries.

Meantime she returned by a round-about way to the lodge. She surprised the little ones dancing without their dog-skins, while their sister was keeping watch over the mannequin. By a rapid movement, their mother seized the skins of the three dogs now become boys, and threw them in the fire. Their sister-dog had come out of her skin as far down as the waist only; she had time to re-enter it before her mother could snatch it away from her. Therefore, she remained a she-dog forever. "Then you are men after all, and yet it is on account of you that I have become so wretched!" exclaimed their mother as she burned their spoils.

¹ The fire-drill or *tcən-tʔiʔ* was known to the primitive Carriers, but the critical condition of the mother and the degree of decrepitude of the old woman rendered its preparation and use impossible.

² Vulgarly called kinnikinnik (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*).

She then made the three brothers a wooden arrow and began to exercise them to the hunt. Therefore they went out with their sister, who henceforth was to act as their hound. She was soon heard barking at a grouse. But her brothers knew not what to do. So they dispatched one of themselves to their mother for advice and directions. "Mother," said he, "our little sister-dog¹ is barking at something perched on a tree. It is all grey, covered with feathers and down, and looks down at us. What is it, and what shall we do with it?" Then his mother answered, saying: "My son, this is what we call a bird. It is good to eat. Let them kill it with their wooden arrow." Thereupon her son ran back to his brothers, who shot the grouse, after which they killed great numbers of like fowl.

Their mother next made them a stone-tipped arrow, and again sent them out hunting. Soon thereafter, one of them came back to consult her in the name of his brothers. "Mother," he said, in arriving, "our little sister-dog is barking at something with short ears and grey neck. What is it, and what shall we do with it?" Then his mother answered, saying: "My son, this is what is called a fisher. Its fur is used to make blankets with. Let them shoot it with their stone-tipped arrow." This they did, and subsequently they killed large numbers of similar animals.

Another day that they had gone as usual on a hunting expedition, one of them came back to consult again their mother, saying: "Mother, our little sister-dog is barking at something long; it is grey all over and has a short nose and a rounded head. What is it, and what shall we do with it?" Their mother made answer thus: "My son, this is what is called a lynx. Its skin is that wherewith blankets are chiefly made. Let them kill it with their arrow." They shot it, and afterwards many an animal of the same kind.

Another day one of them came back again from the chase to take advice from his mother. "Mother," he said, "our little sister-dog is barking after something which is big, very black and has no tail. It is grunting at us. What is it, and what shall we do with it?" Then their mother answered: "My son, this is what is called a bear. Its flesh is good to eat. Let them shoot it with their arrow." They killed it, and thereafter a great number of bears.

Still another day they sent one of themselves to consult their mother. He said to her: "Mother, our little sister-dog is barking at something very big and all grey. It seems very bad-tempered and angry, as it is constantly rushing at her; but she is so swift-footed that she successfully avoids it. What is it, and what shall we do with it?" "This must be a

¹ *Netis-nit'sé*, our younger sister-dog, in the same sense as Jacob was Esau's junior.

grizzly bear, my son," said his mother. "It is also occasionally eaten. Therefore let them kill it." So they did, and thenceforth they killed great numbers of those animals.

Another day that one of them had returned from the chase to take advice from his mother, he said to her: "Mother, our little sister-dog is pursuing an animal which has long legs and on the head something resembling the upright roots of a fallen tree¹. What is it and what shall we do with it?" Then she made answer thus: "My son, that animal is called a caribou. Its meat is very good, and its skin serves to make moccasins with. Let them shoot it." Therefore they shot it, and afterwards many more caribou.

Lastly, one day that one of them was again consulting his mother, he said to her: "Mother, our little sister-dog is chasing a very large animal not unlike the caribou, but bigger. What can it be and what to do with it?" Upon which his mother said in answer: "My son, this is what we call a moose. Its flesh is excellent, and its skin is also very useful. Let them shoot it." After they had shot it, they also killed many more moose.

They were now exercised to hunt all kinds of animals, and they had grown to be young men and successful hunters. In recognition of the service rendered their mother by the old woman who had preserved fire for her at the time that she had been abandoned, they used to present her, after each hunt, with the fat of the animals mixed with their blood. One day that they wanted to fool her, they mixed pieces of rotten wood with blood and offered the whole to her, saying: "Grandmother², fry this fat mixed with blood which we give you as is our wont." The old woman did as she was bid, but she soon detected the fraud, upon which she exclaimed: "*Passa! ya'téh'gènuhtiq!*"³ Oh! may you be translated up to the sky!" For she was indeed very angry.

Now it came to pass that a short time afterwards their sister-dog scented a herd of caribou. They set at once in pursuit of the game. Far, very far away they ran on the tracks of their sister-dog, and yet they could not catch up with her. The more they advanced, the higher up they were going. At length, after a very long chase, one of the three thought of sitting down to rest awhile. Looking back, he discovered that they had reached the sky, and then he was terrified indeed. He

¹ *Raz*, a primary root, means all that.

² In the Déné legends, the old women are always addressed as grandmothers.

³ Archaic form of words in the Lower Carrier dialect. *Passa!* has no modern equivalent and is expressive of spite and rage.

told his brothers and they looked down. Then they also felt their hearts falling down at this. After a little time, they held consultation together as to the best means of returning to the earth. Then, on the advice of the eldest but one, they dropped down the little packages of dried salmon¹ which each of them had carried so far as provisions for the journey. They hung underneath a grey jay, and carefully cautioned the bird not to look up until they had all got back to their country. They expected to be taken down to the earth along with the flying bird. But the jay could not resist the temptation of taking a look at the salmon which he considered as his prospective prey. Therefore the whole assemblage of the three brothers with their packages of salmon underneath was fixed forever in the sky, men and salmon being changed into stars.

These we now see every clear night. The three brothers we call *Em'tə* or the Pursuers². Their sister underwent a like transformation, and we can also see her a short distance off under the shape of a solitary star. Ahead of the whole is *Səmīnu*³ which is nothing else than the herd of caribou chased by the three brothers. Those stars are always scintillating as if constantly on the move. This is because the caribou are fleeing from the three brothers. In a straight line beneath the hunters are three smaller stars; they are the packages of salmon changed into stars by the curiosity of the jay. As for the bird, he flew away, and therefore he cannot now be seen.

When the mother of the three brothers and of the she-dog saw that the sun had disappeared below the horizon without their coming back, she became very anxious; for they used to return home by daylight⁴. At last, having accidentally looked up to the heavens, she beheld them there stationary under the form of stars. Mad with sorrow and guessing that this was due to the witchcraft of the old woman, she ran out to her and loaded her with a coiled-root basket⁵ full of burning coals which she placed on her back, constantly to pack thereafter. Then she thrust a roasting-spit through her and hurled her up to the East, saying, "Henceforth you shall be she after whom daylight comes⁶." The old woman

¹ The daily bread of the Carriers.

² Orion.

³ The Pleiades. Their Carrier name is an old word, the nearest equivalent of which would be "star island."

⁴ In Carrier legends, hunters are very generally supposed to return before night, unless they meet with some accident.

⁵ There are no such baskets among the Carriers, but they are very common among the Tsiṣṣoh'tin, the southern neighbours of the sub-tribe to which my narrator belongs.

⁶ *U'kwe-yəṣṣaih oñlè*. The morning star.

was thus translated up to the sky, and she it is whom we see every morning under the shape of a big star. Her basket full of burning coals explains how it is that the star is so bright.

COMMENTS.

I think that it requires but little acumen to perceive the difference which exists between the present and the preceding stories. The purely mythic character of the one is as clear as the legendary complexion of the others. This remark applies more especially to the second part of the latter narrative, which is altogether mythic or fabulous, while the episode of the procreation of the hybrid brothers and sister might perhaps be regarded as figurative of the mixed origin of the Déné stock. Unless we choose to see in the representative of the canine gens and its nocturnal visits to the maiden a counterpart of the Incubus, the male demon who was formerly believed to consort with women in their sleep. But the first hypothesis is much more probable and natural. Taken as a whole and compared with the other American, and some Asiatic, races, the Déné nation is of a relatively moral disposition, and the monstrous union of the virgin with the old dog might be taken as symbolical of the former intermarriages between the original ancestors of the Déné, whoever they may have been, and some immoral and dissolute race either in Asia or on the coast of America.

Indeed, a particular Déné tribe, that of the Dog-Ribs¹, owes its distinctive name to a similar traditional intercourse of a dog with a woman, and the members of that tribe believe themselves to be the offspring of that union. Shorn of a few repetitions and unimportant monologues, their story is as follows :—

A woman belonging to the tribe of the Yellow-Knives² was living with her brothers when a beautiful stranger came from an unknown land, whom she was made to marry, as so far she had persisted in remaining single. As she awoke during the night she was surprised not to find her husband by her side, but instead she heard a dog gnawing some bones left on the hearth. As she had no dog, she was puzzled and was curious to ascertain whence the canine had come. Fire was rekindled, but no dog was seen. After some more rest, she again awoke to hear the same gnawing in the dark, when one of her brothers threw his axe in the direction of the noise. There was a great outcry, and after the fire had been kindled again, a big black dog was seen lying lifeless, whereby she

¹ An Eastern Déné tribe whose habitat lies between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake.

² Habitat east of Lake Athapaska.

and her brothers knew that the animal was nobody else than her husband who, man by the daytime, became dog during the night.

For her relations with the brute, the woman was abandoned, and in due course of time she bore six little dogs, which she kept in a satchel. One day that she came back from a visit to her rabbit-snares, she noticed footprints as of children on the hearth. Desirous of learning whence they proceeded, she attached a long cord to the lacing-string of the sack containing her little ones and, telling them that she was going again to visit her snares she left, but merely went to hide herself a short distance off behind a bush. The little dogs believing themselves alone and unseen, came out of their sack, when their mother pulled the cord, thereby closing it against three, two males and one female, who had come out transformed into boys and girl respectively. Those that remained dogs she abandoned, while the two boys became powerful hunters and, marrying their sister, were the ancestors of the Dog-Rib tribe.¹

Here ends in the original text of Petitot what that branch of the Déné family regards as its national legend. One particular of some sociological importance we seem justified in inferring from the above, viz.: that polyandry did not seem repulsive to the social notions of the Dog-Ribs, any more than their congeners, the Tsé'kéhne, deemed it, until a recent date, inconsistent with propriety. That the former tribe is too exclusive in its appropriation of the tale is shown by the fact that the Tsiṣṣoh'tin possess a tradition substantially the same as that just related, and all the main details of which are identical with those of the Carrier story. Among the Tsiṣṣoh'tin, the lodge is simply replaced by the *ṭiṣṣan* or subterranean hut, while the bear-berries of the Carrier myth are with them a species of tuberculous root, of which they are particularly fond.

The Hare Indians, another Déné tribe², share with the Kutchin, the northernmost division of that exclusive family, the belief in a tradition according to which "they formerly dwelt very far away in the west and beyond the sea, in the midst of a very powerful nation among which magicians used to transform themselves into dogs or wolves during the night, while they became men again during the day. These people had taken wives from among the Déné³." The Kutchin describe that nation as very immoral and going almost naked. According to Petitot, the same Indians believe also in the existence, on the Asiatic continent, of a nation of dog-men, the upper part of whose body they state to be that of

¹ *Traditions indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest, par l' Abbé E. Petitot*, p. 301.

² Habitat : Mackenzie, Anderson and MacFarlane Rivers.

³ *Essai sur l'origine des Déné-Dindjié* ; Paris, 1876, p. xxviii.

a man, while the lower part is that of a dog.¹ Their name for these monsters is Tlin-akeni, which means at the same time Dog-feet and Dog-race (*filis de chien*).

To return to our legend. It would seem as if its first part were a sort of national tradition among the hyperborean races of America, since even the Eskimo have a story which is evidently the equivalent of it. According to Dr. F. Boas, an old Eskimo was living alone with his daughter who, for a long time, would not marry. At length a dog, spotted white and red, won her affection and became her husband. By him she had ten children, five of whom were dogs and five were Adlet, a tribe of fabulous beings half-men, half-dogs. The former became the ancestors of the Europeans, while the latter were the progenitors of a numerous people².

As to the second part of our myth, namely, the beautiful story of the initiation of the three brothers into the mysteries of the hunt, and their final transformation into stars, it is, as far as I know, found among no other Déné tribe, except the Tsiṣṣoh'tin. But the Central Eskimo have a legend which, though strongly impregnated with local colouring, bears a close resemblance thereto. Here it is, after Dr. Boas:—

“Three men went bear hunting with a sledge and took a young boy with them. When they approached the edge of the floe, they saw a bear and went in pursuit. Though the dogs ran fast they could not get nearer, and all of a sudden they observed that the bear was lifted up and their sledge followed. At this moment the boy lost one of his mittens and in the attempt to pick it up fell from the sledge. Then he saw the men ascending higher and higher, finally being transformed into stars. The bear became the star Nanuqjung (Betelgeux); the pursuers, Udleqjung (Orion's belt), and the sledge, Kamutiqjung (Orion's sword). The men continue the pursuit up to this day; the boy, however, returned to the village and told how the men were lost.”³

It is but natural to see savages believe in the personal nature of the heavenly bodies, when even Plato, the great philosopher, thought that the stars were as many animated beings. All the mythologies are unanimous in personifying, each according to the particular bias and the favourite avocation of the people, the constellations and principal stars of the firmament. Hence, the Pleiades, which are among the sedentary people

¹ *Ibid*, p. xxix.

² The Central Eskimo, by Dr. F. Boas, Sixth Ann. Rep. Bur. Ethnol.; Washington, 1888, p. 637.

³ *Ibid*, p. 637.

of Europe the "Hen and Her Chickens," and were among the poetic inhabitants of Greece the seven daughters of Atlas, become a herd of caribou among the native hunters of North America. It is perhaps worth noticing, in this connection, that the Greeks believed also that the Pleiades were being pursued by Orion, the gigantic hunter who, after his death at the hands of his fair but jealous companion, Artemis, was placed among the stars together with his hound.

